

Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam

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Office of the Governor

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**Governor Northam Dedicates Capitol
Square Improvements, Honoring Service of
Important Virginians**

*~ Honors first African American legislator, Medal of Honor Recipient,
longest-serving family on Capitol Square, and beloved Police Officer ~*

RICHMOND—Governor Northam today dedicated newly-renovated state buildings on Capitol Square and celebrated the completion of the 9th Street sidewalk enhancements and new North Drive entrance to Capitol Square.

Governor Northam dedicated “Reid’s Row,” a row of three historic houses on Governor Street in honor of Dr. William Ferguson “Fergie” Reid, who was the first African American elected to the General Assembly after Reconstruction and who co-founded the Richmond Crusade for Voters in 1956. The houses were formerly named Morson’s Row.

One of the three townhouses of Reid’s Row (#223) was named the “Townes House,” in honor of the Townes family that has served the Executive Mansion since the 1970s. Nine members of the Townes family—over three generations—have provided impeccable service and generous hospitality to residents and guests of the Executive Mansion. Current family members serving there include Martin “Tutti” Townes, his wife Stephanie Townes, son Martin Townes Jr., and daughter Cherry Townes.

“I know my mother is smiling down on Virginia today,” said **Tutti Townes, head Butler at the Executive Mansion**.

“Thank you on behalf of the **Reid** family for the naming of **Reid**’s row,” said **Dr. William Ferguson Reid**, 96, who participated by video from his home in California. “I want to congratulate the Townes family, the Sargent family, and the Dowdy family, on the achievements that they have done.” **Reid** also recounted his experience working to register more Virginians to vote at a time when Virginia was still segregated and used ballot barriers as a way to limit Black voter registration. Ferguson praised Virginia’s recent work to expand ballot access, but said he sees parallels to Virginia’s past in current efforts in other states to limit voting access.

“Today is about honoring good people who have served Virginia with great distinction, both today and in the past,” said **Governor Ralph S. Northam**. “I especially want to thank and honor the Townes family. They have made Pam’s and my time in the Executive Mansion a very happy moment in our lives. Virginia is a better place because of the Townes family.”

Governor Northam dedicated the “Sargent Building” in honor of **First Lieutenant Ruppert L. Sargent, the first African American officer to receive the Medal of Honor**, America’s highest military decoration. The Hampton native graduated from Virginia State University and served in the U.S. Army, when he was killed in action during the Vietnam War. A city office building in Hampton is also named for him. The building on Capitol Square will be used by the Division of Capitol Police and was formerly known as the Ferguson Building.

Dr. **Reid** and Lieutenant Sargent are both graduates of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in Virginia.

The renovated entrance to North Drive will honor Capitol Police Master Officer Woodrow W. “Buddy” Dowdy III at the new Post 1 guardhouse. Dowdy served as a Capitol Police officer for 33 years and spent the last decade of his service assigned to Post 1, where he welcomed visitors, legislators and state employees with a smile. He died on March 9, 2021.

“Buddy was an outstanding police officer, a dear friend, and a good man,” said **Colonel Steve Pike**, Chief of Capitol Police. “We all miss him very much.”

These improvements further enhance Capitol Square, along with improvements to Governor’s Street, extensive renovations to Old City Hall, and construction of the new General Assembly Building and the parking deck at 9th and Broad Streets. Those projects are expected to be completed in the coming months.

“As stewards of the grounds and buildings of Capitol Square, it is our responsibility at DGS to preserve and renovate these important historic buildings and structures,” **said Joe Damico**, director of the Department of General Services. “We feel a real sense of stewardship for these properties, and I personally feel tremendous pride at the work our teams have accomplished.” The Department of General Services is renovating the historic row homes, updating the space to comply with ADA standards while preserving many historic parts of the buildings.

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